

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE  
BEFORE THE TRADEMARK TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD

Proceeding	92052197
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MOTOR TREND

# classic

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-DRIVE-> <1969 YENKO CHEVROLET-

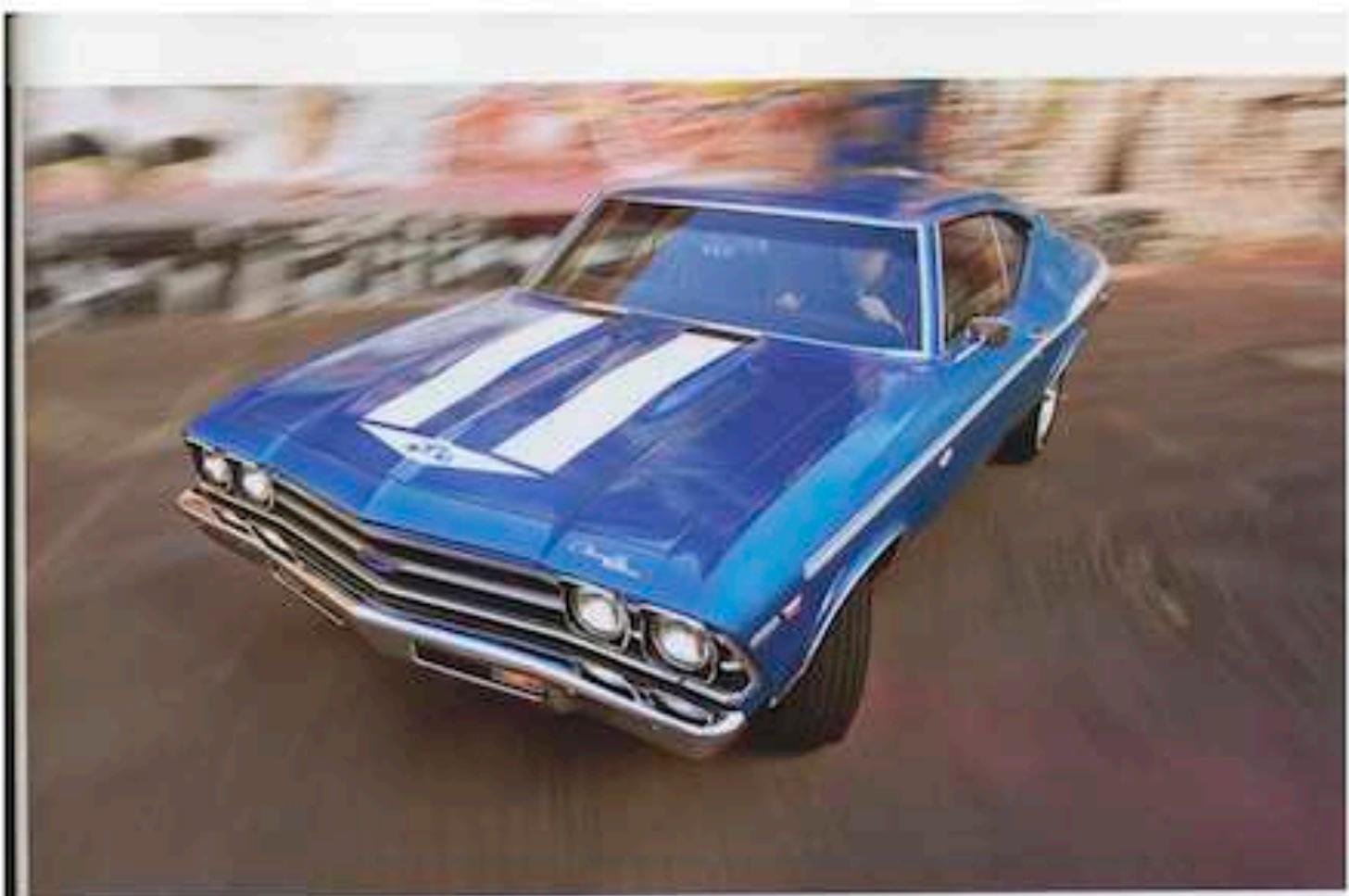
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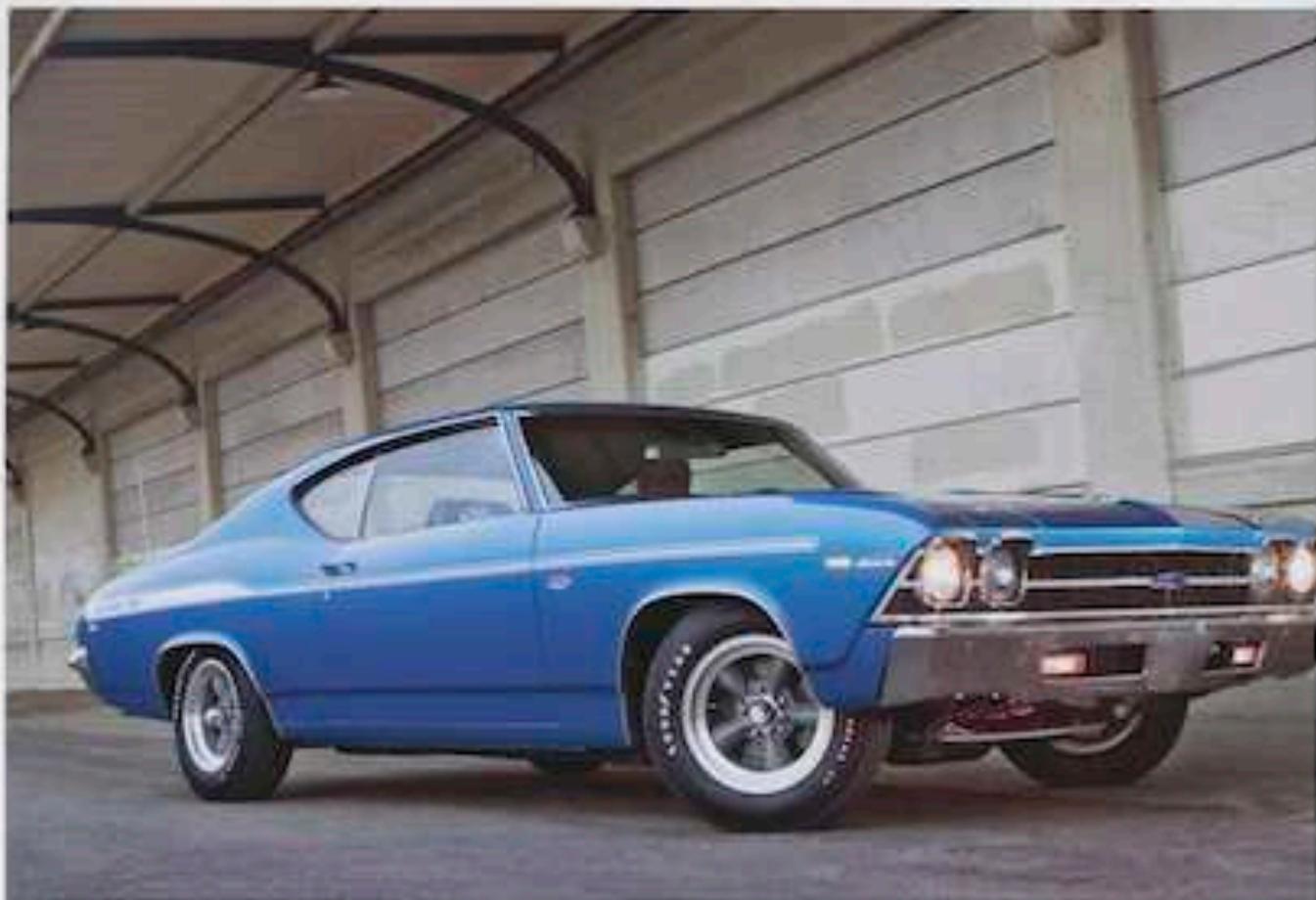
COPO BIG-BLOCKS AND YENKO TUNING  
PAIR FOR THE MOST LEGENDARY  
MUSCLECARS OF ALL TIME

• • • WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS JOHN KIEWICZ





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# THE BIG

solid-lifter camshaft in the 427 V-8 delivers a choppy idle that echoes through the dual exhaust. Breathe on the throttle, and the 11:1 compression big-block revs quickly and confidently, despite its 40-plus year age. Owner Greg Joseph has had the car barely a year and hasn't yet taken the 427 to its 6000-rpm redline when he hands over the keys, offering Motor Trend Classic the opportunity to drive a legend.

Joseph's 1969 Yenko Chevelle is a bit more special than others. Not only is this V-8 Chevelle considered one of the sincerest examples in the world, it's also one of a handful with an original, unaltered, numbers-matching drivetrain. One missed shift with the Muncie M-44 manual trans, one overset of the motor, and my career will be finished.

The linkage on the Yenko-installed Hurst shifter is vague. By 1960s standards, the aftermarket upgrade was top-notch, but now it feels like a spoon in a mayonnaise jar. The stoplight turns green, the heavy-duty clutch is engaged, the car hurtles forward, and—as the 427 blows past

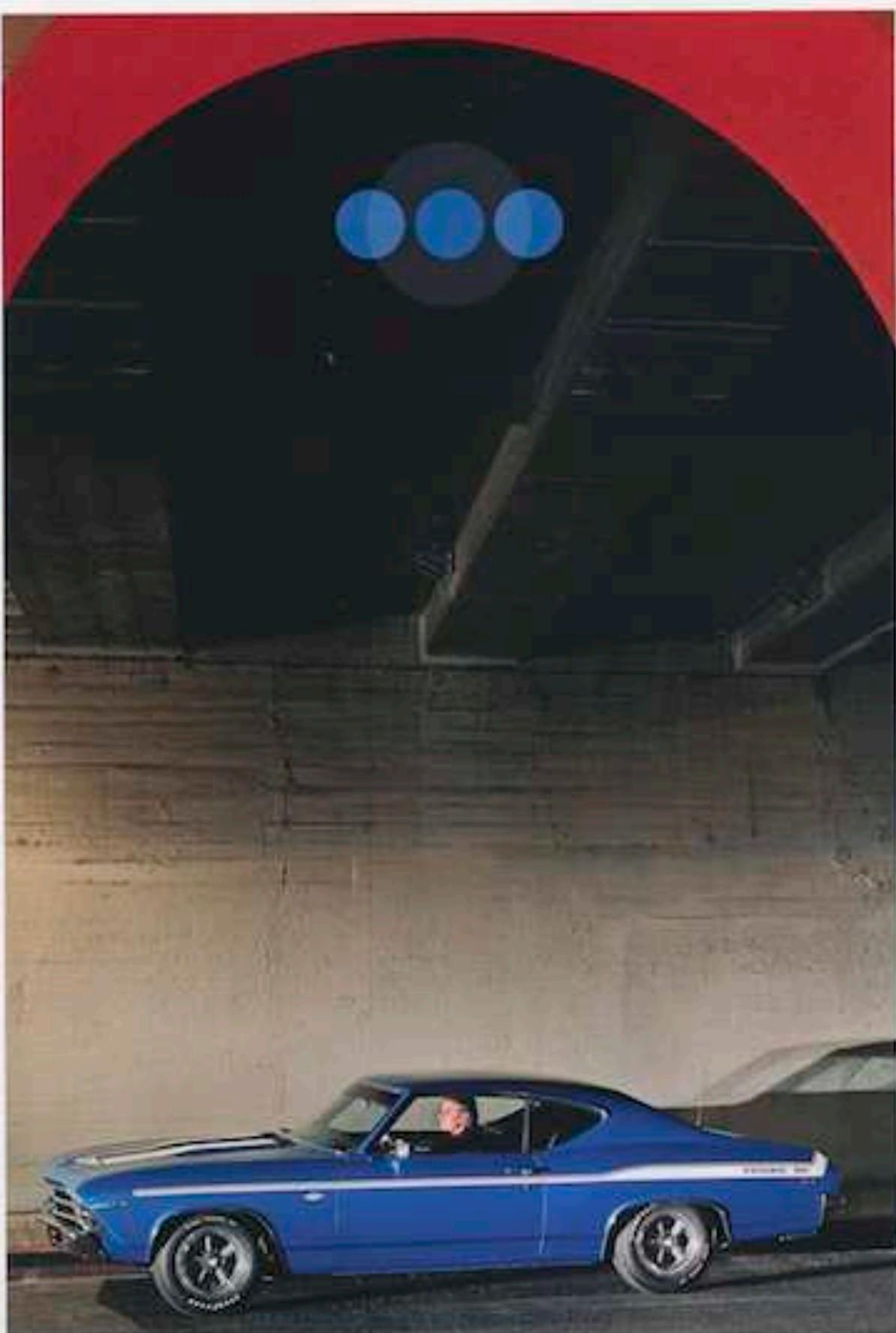
6000 rpm—the needle on the Stewart Warner tach begins shaking almost as Joseph. The big-block's torque overpowers the thin, hard-as-ho GoodYear Polyglas ECO-1 tires. The 7.25-inch shift is briskly made, too, the cabin, and a pair of black lines show in the marlin-mirror

Off the throttle, the aggressive 180-degree-duration camshaft delivers maximum deceleration. The raw big block is still intact, and so is my heart; the thing—despite employing crude 1960s-era technology, the motor delivers an impressive top-end charge that's hard to match even today's technotronic wizardry. News flash: Big cubes and pushrods will done after all these years.

## THE MYTH

The myth is Don Yenko's dealership installed a special 421-horse big-block into the 1969 Yenko Super Car (V8) Camaro and Chevelle. The 1969-1970 Yenkos were "transplant" cars—meaning Yenko physics in new engines—the 1969 Yenkos (excluding the Nova) were not actually offered a little-known internal ordering program called a Special Order Production Order (SOPCO). This order enabled the factory certain non-RPO (Regular Production Ordered) engines. Available for the 1969 was option COPO 901 along with option COPO 902 for the 1970. Although the COPO numbers differed, the result was the same—a 7.25-inch 427 cubic-inch big-block Chevrolet V-8 rated at 421 horsepower pound-feet of torque.

While many thought the 427 engine was specially built for Yenko, in stock 1968 Corvette engine installed on the GM assembly line and then Yenko's Chevrolet dealership in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. Criminalized



## <DRIVE> <1969 YENKO CHEV

cover on the driver's side. In special-order cases, Yenko installed aluminized exhaust headers said to be worth 20-30 horsepower alone.

Most Yenko Chevelles received unique interior appointments, such headrests with white "Y/C" lettering, a Stewart Warner "pro-series" 9 rpm tachometer (adjustable needle was set at 6000 rpm), an 8-foot pod Stewart Warner gauge cluster (oil pressure, amperage, temperature), and a Hurst shifter assembly attached to the Muncie 4-speed manual transmission. The long Hurst chrome shifter handle (MUNCIE) was tipped by a classic black ball inscribed with the H-pattern. Most automatic transmission Yenkos (of which just over 200 were fitted with a Hurst Dual-Gate shifter to operate the M-44 4L60 transmission, Joseph's off-600 original sales Yenko is considered desirable, as it's one of just a few with an original interior).

Yenko further added flair in the form of the now-famous decals that covered front and sides. On the hood, two white stripes join a large to incorporate the trademark "Y/C" lettering. Running from the front side lights to the rear taillights are white stripes that incorporate YENKO'S. Reportedly, the original stripes were installed by Yenko's daughter's much care for attention to detail. With many cars, including Joseph's, they overlap each other thus generating a sensible bump...cosmically man hard to increase the stripe bump. Custom red/white/blue Yenko emblem along with chrome 427 badges.

Also part of the Yenko package were aftermarket aluminum wheels. If the Chevelle was delivered to Yenko's dealership with 14x7.00-8 steel Rally wheels, the car was upgraded with American Racing Torq-T 14x7.00- or 14x8.00-inch cast aluminum wheels or same-size Atlas cast-a-wheels that looked identical to the Americans. Either way, the original Polyglas tires were remounted on the new wheels. The Polyglas tire marginal traction with a Chevelle's stock L-34 390 V-8, much less with extra horsepower afforded by the Yenko-tuned L-72 427 COPO 396 with an oversize front anti-roll bar from the factory, but otherwise the stock shocks, springs, and bushings remained unmodified by Yenko. Drive train upgrade Yenko offered was a choice of more aggressive 4.10 gears in lieu of the COPO's special 4.11:1 ratio fitted to the 427 in

Yenko's special tuning, consisting of carb rejetting, tighter valve lash, and more aggressive ignition timing was said to be worth about 15 horsepower.



Convert to option RPO L-72, the cast-iron block 427 made use of heavy-duty internals such as a forged-steel crankshaft and rods, 10.5-compression forged-aluminum pistons, a 0.020-inch lift solid-lifter camshaft, cast-iron "rectangle port" cylinder heads, and a cast-aluminum dual-plenum intake manifold topped with a Holley 750-cfm "mechanical secondary" four-barrel carburetor. Also part of the mix was a heavy-duty flywheel and 11-inch-diameter clutch along with a Harrison heavy-duty radiator.

### THE SYC PACKAGE

So if the engine came already installed in the car, what exactly did Yenko do? First, Yenko was among a select few dealers who knew about the COPO ordering process. Once the L-72 427 was installed, Yenko applied his special tuning, which included more aggressive ignition timing, revised carburetor jetting, more accurate rocker arm "lash" adjustment, and such. The result? More horsepower and crisper throttle response. To inform passersby of the engine's prowess, a red/white "Yenko/C-427" sticker was affixed to the

### BUYING A YENKO

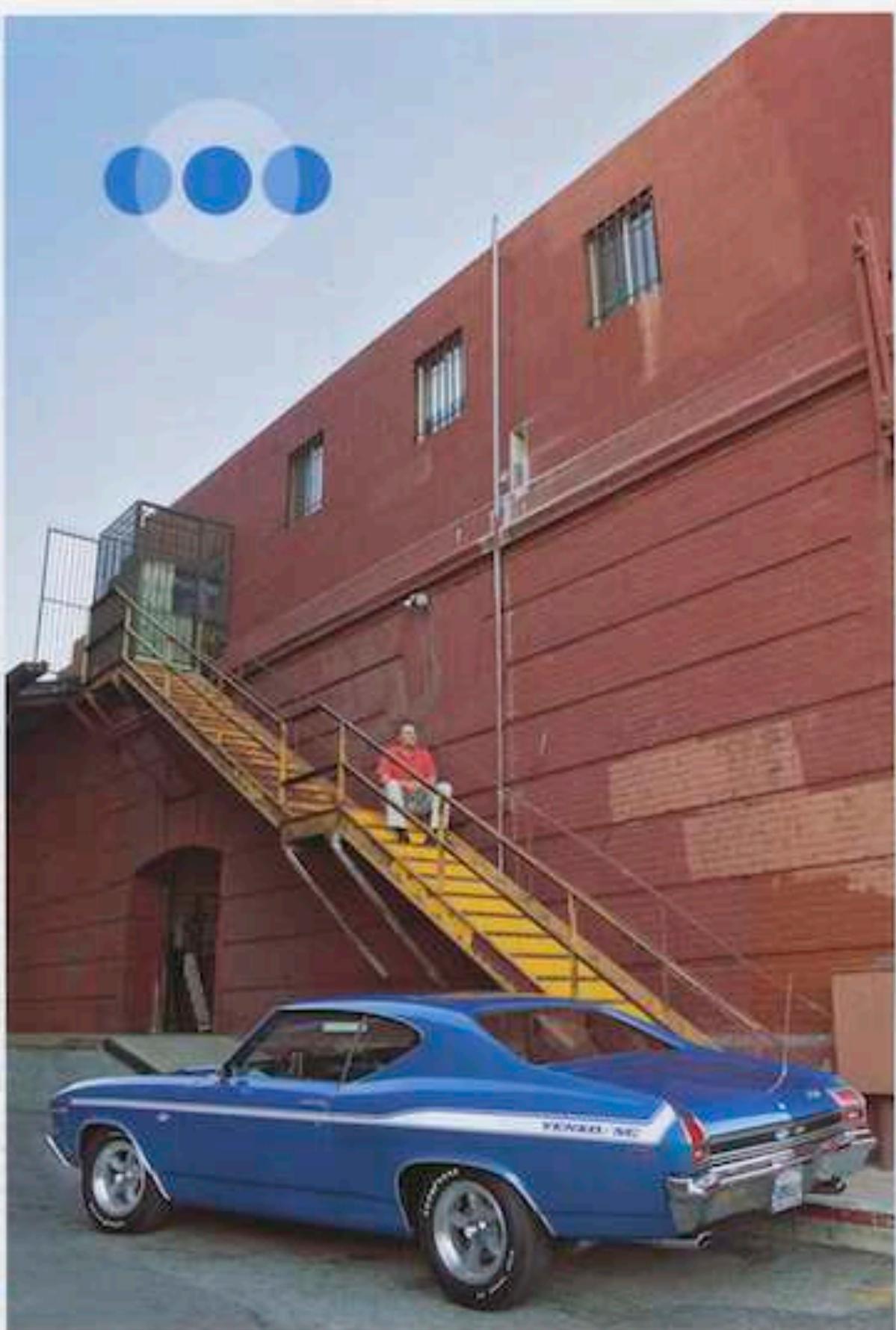
In the beginning, you needed to buy directly from Yenko's Pennsylvania lot as time passed (and popularity grew), you could purchase a "Y/C" dealership. Yenko Chevelle color choices were limited to eight (Satin Damask Yellow, Dover White, Garnet Red, Hugger Orange, Le Mans Blue Gold, and Pathway Green), and the Yenko stripes came on nearly all.

Joseph's Chevelle is heavily documented; the original Yenko order slip GM Project O-Plate, and even the actual "sold" deposit tag still survive. Howard Liversey originally sold the car to Gary Montini until 1989. Montini put down a meager \$100 deposit to hold the car delivered, and the car arrived on the morning of March 28, 1969. Montini paid and drove off with his new Yenko Chevelle. Opposing the car and proper painted gray would've added a few hundred dollars to the car. Today, fewer than 15 Yenko Chevelles retain their original driveline.

As enticing as the Yenko package seemed, there were other gains in the Chevrolet dealerships across the country offered similar performance so the 427 Rat race for more power quickly began. Legendary dealerships included Baldwin-Motion, Dale Berger, Bill Thomas/Nickey, Harrell, Fred Gibb, and Joseph Scuncio. Just as with Yenko, a build from any of the above named is highly sought by collectors.

### WHO WAS YENKO?

Dan Yenko's father started Yenko's General Garage in Bentley, Pa., which in 1954 became a franchised Chevrolet dealership known as Chevrolet. Thirteen years later, the dealership moved to Canonsburg,





## <DRIVE> <1969 YENKO CHEV

Lots of Yenko badging, Stewart Warner gauges, and a Hurst shifter are all part of the sYc package.



### 1969 YENKO CHEVELLE

#### SPECIFICATIONS

**Engine:** 421.9-cu-in/6996cc OHV V-8, 780 cfm Holley 4x4-bbl carb  
**Power and torque (SAE gross):** 425 hp @ 5600 rpm, 460 lb-ft @ 4100 rpm  
**Drivetrain:** 4-speed manual, RWD  
**Brakes:** front: 11-in vented disc; rear: drum  
**Suspension:** front: control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar; rear: axle, coil springs  
**Dimensions:** L: 196.9 in., W: 76.0 in., H: 52.8 in.  
**Weight:** 3490 lb  
**Performance:** quarter-mile: 13.3 sec @ 108.0 mph C  
**Stock & Drag Illustrated, August 1969**—air filter removed, rear tires  
**Price when new:** \$4362.50



### ASK THE MAN WHO OWNS ONE

AS THE CURATOR for the late Otis Chandler's world-renowned musclecar collection, Dr. Greg Joseph simultaneously took on duties as a USC professor. Today, Joseph is so well versed in musclecar history he's often sought out to authenticate for other collector's purchases.

**WHY I LIKE IT:** "It is in my blood. When born, I was brought a 1930 Pierce-Arrow. As a teenager, I drove it in a 1969 Z/28. The Yenko Chevelle is iconic musclecar that has COPD 427 big-block 350 on narrow Polyglas tires."

**WHY IT'S COLLECTABLE:** Much rarer than the Camaro (201 built), Yenko Chevelle just 99 cars. Today, 40 Yenko Chevelles known to exist.

#### RESTORING/MAINTAINING:

Yenko Chevelles are difficult to find in any condition, as an unrestored car is worth saving because of its rarity and value. Yenko VINs have been published, therefore forgeries are easy to spot. Companies such as Original Parts Group and Year One offer good restoration parts.

**EXPECT TO PAY:** Concours ready: \$350,000; solid driver: \$225,000; tired runner: \$100,000

**JOIN THE CLUB:** American Chevelle Enthusiasts Society (ACES), [www.aces.org](http://www.aces.org)

PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. GREG JOSEPH



As an only child, Don Yenko, started a performance division of his father's dealership in great part to accommodate his own desire to race. By the late 1960s, Yenko Chevrolet was a premier tuner, offering over-the-counter performance parts along with personalized modifications for customer cars.

Don Yenko's first official turnkey vehicle package was a 1968 Yenko "Stinger" Camaro that employed the early use of COPO ordering, which, in turn, generated a Chevrolet-built, high-performance package. Engine swaps and custom upgrades increased thereafter, with 1970 being the hallmark year for performance—with the L-71 big-block offered in the Camaro (not built), Chevelle (99 built), and the ultimate Nova (just on the build list with just one actually converted).

The options proved rough for Yenko (and American auto manufacturers generally), and subsequent Yenko offerings were docile by comparison. A Yenko "Stinger II" Vega was built, but at the last minute the turbocharger upgrade was relegated to an over-the-counter option as final EPA certification proved too much of a hurdle for a turnkey package.

The last of Yenko's tuned performance packages was the 1970 Camaro Z-13 "Yenko Turbo Z," which included a turbocharger for the 350-cid V-8 engine, a special graphics package, a custom front nose, Koni shocks, aftermarket wheels, and unique leather seats. As evidenced by dismal sales figures for Turbo Zs were produced, the end of Yenko's tuner car era had arrived, and Yenko Chevrolet was sold in 1981.

Don continued with his love of auto racing and flying for many years. In 1987, his life came to an end as his Cessna airplane crashed on final approach near



Although the 427 emblems look like something pirated from another GM product, they were specially cast for Yenko.